CHAPTER VIII

A PACIFIC SAGA

ON leaving Mataiea, one enters the district of Papeari. A true surprise is in preparation, and almost at once a distinct change even in the very vegetation that borders the road can be noted. Perhaps its sign-post is a giant grove of the Tahitian tree, the *mape,* which one finds on the left as one rounds a corner, for while the *mape* is an indigenous tree, associated with the old legends and traditions of the island and its people, these are the first to be met that civilisation has left since we left Papeete. Strangely gnarled and twisted, the great trunks climb up from the swamp at their roots, and so thick are their high-reaching branches and leaves